HOWARD BECKERMAN:

A JOURNEYMAN'S JOURNEY

by Bob Coar

I'm hard-pressed to figure out a 'hook' for this article. Howard Beckerman fits into numerous peg-holes, one being "animator", so let me start there.

. . . HAH! If only it were that simple! Because Howard Beckerman mostly made TV commercials, which do not have credits. Thus, Howard leaves scant on-line footprint as an animator. He does turn up in some documentaries speaking on the subject of old cartoons. You can also find him quoted in books, the one he wrote, and the ones with interviews he did. It's not that he isn't well known. He is, but for what exactly?

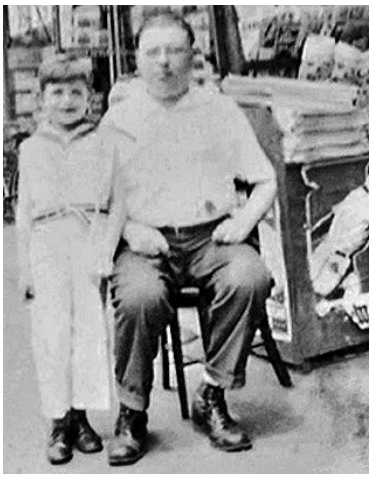
About a decade ago I became interested in New York City's animation history, and on that path all roads lead to Beckerman. How many books is he cited in? Magazine articles? Documentaries?

But it's usually talking points, because each interviewer is focused on a specific time and place or project. "What was it like at UPA?" . . .

I've interviewed Howard Beckerman myself a bunch of times. A nice guy, but unless he suddenly goes postal with an axe, that doesn't help much with my hook. Frankly, I'm perplexed, so it's probably better to have Howard tell you his story in his own way.

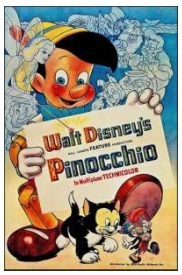
BC: **Okay, Howard, where did you grow up?**

HB: Near the end of 1930 I was born in the Bronx, but just before I turned six years old, we moved to Flatbush, in Brooklyn. I had started Kindergarten in the Bronx, at P.S. 90, but completed it at P.S.181 in Flatbush. At the end of the first day in this new environment, each student took a partner and lined up to exit the class uniformly. I was the new kid and I had no partner, but I noticed a tall boy standing alone at the end of the line. I walked over to him and asked him his name. "Sandy," he replied. Together we followed the class out the door. Today, 86 years after, Sandy and I are still close friends.



We moved to Brooklyn because my parents, after closing one business, had purchased a candy store. Though I hadn't learned to read yet, the store offered a new world of comic books to browse. Famous Funnies, the first official pulp comic, had been published two years before. Here I was, scanning through Detective Comics before Batman, and was also there in June 1938 the moment that Superman arrived. I was outside the store when an older boy exited with his purchase, Action Comics number one. The magazine's cover featured a costumed man hoisting a green automobile and smashing it against a rock formation. This kid had opened the magazine and responded to what he was seeing there, "Hey, this guy does everything!"

BC: **And that made you want to become an animator?**



HB: My decision to get into animation began when I was 9 years old. Though I had seen cartoon shorts, Mickey Mouse, Donald Duck and the feature length Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs, it was after an afternoon at the movies, watching Pinocchio, that I decided that that was what I wanted to do. Like many cartoonists, I had been interested in comics, since I was 4 years old. Newspaper strips were usually the first art that we encountered. Another push toward the medium, in most of our cases, was the Great Depression. Families were in financial trouble when businesses collapsed. The desire for stability, as well as celebrity, drove many of us kids toward areas that promised success. Evidence of riches in the movie business was apparent from the publicized doings of popular film stars. In that day before television and the internet, when newspapers were a key source of information, cartoonists enjoyed a similar spot in the public perception of successful people. Whenever I saw a photo of a cartoonist in a newspaper or a magazine, I would notice that they were positioned at a desk with a large white sheet of drawing paper in front of them, a pen or brush in one hand and an opened bottle of India ink in the other. My reaction, without knowing the ins and outs of the cartooning world, would be that if all that was required was a sheet of paper, a pen and a bottle of ink, that this was an inexpensive business to get into. But viewing Pinocchio at the local RKO theater n Flatbush set me on a journey of further discovery about animation and how it was done.

BC: **I imagine it was a very different world back then?**

HB: In the late 1940s there were about 18 newspapers in New York City. Some had morning, afternoon and evening editions. Over the next few years I began picking up tidbits, mostly from Disney promotional articles in magazines and daily newspapers. More instructive were the occasional article in publications such as

Popular Science or Popular Mechanics that explained the "magic of the movies." From these I acquired a closer understanding of the techniques of effects and animation.

On a Friday afternoon in 1946, riding the subway from Manhattan back to Flatbush, I noticed a man reading the afternoon edition of *The World Telegram*, There was an article, the final one of a weeklong series about moviemaking in the New York area. It was titled, "Hollywood on the Hudson." That day's article was related to animation production. Three studios were highlighted: Famous Studios which was animating Popeye and Caspar the Ghost cartoon shorts, the Ted Eshbaugh Studio which had done a series of Captain Cub cartoons and the Terrytoon organization which was known for Gandy Goose and Mighty Mouse. The important thing about this article, for me, was to discover that these studios were local. Famous and Ted Eshbaugh were next door to each other on 45th Street in Midtown Manhattan and Terrytoons was just above NYC in New Rochelle. I made it a point to visit the 45th Street location to stand outside the buildings. I looked up, and on the second floor of 35 West, I saw, through a window, the corner of a desk with an attached gooseneck lamp. My first ever view of a working animation studio! Many years later when my own small studio occupied space in some of these buildings I would jokingly tell visitors that I never looked out the window. They would ask why and I would say, "Because there might be some kid looking up."

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Shortly after this discovery, I went up to the Eshbaugh studio at 35 West 45th Street. As I spoke with a receptionist I noticed, through a partially opened door, an animator at a desk. I asked about the possibilities of getting a summer job there. The response was that I should stop by again and bring samples of my work.

I was 16 years old and studying cartooning and illustration at The High School of Industrial Art in Manhattan. I had not yet completed enough work that I considered showable. I didn't go back to Eshbaugh, but the idea of working towards a serviceable portfolio became a strong goal.

BC: **So how did you get started in the business?**

HB: At graduation, my illustration teacher, Ben Clements, made an appointment for me with Paul Terry. I had been stopping by various commercial art studios in town and each time I saw what they did there, I realized more and more that I preferred animation. By now I had a portfolio of the kind of cartoon drawings that I enjoyed doing. Terry was pleased with what he saw. Terry had a fatherly presence. We

conversed and he answered my questions. I started work there the very next day.. That was 1949.

Okay, so that's as far as Howard and I got on that interview project before we drifted away to other things. Sadly, the following notice from Howard's daughter Sheri was just forwarded to me:

My father, Howard Beckerman, passed this morning, June 29, at 3:30 am.

Lung cancer took the man, a valued resource in animation research. He never smoked. My own memory is no match for Howard's. Regardless, I am compelled to write this article out of deep respect, and hope I get it all correct. Howard started with Terrytoons as an Office Boy, quickly rose to Cel Painter, and moved on to Inker. Those last two jobs paid $1.65 per hour in union shops. Terrytoons refused to join the union. Howard was promoted to Inbetweening for Jim Tyer working on Mighty Mouse. Heckle & Jeckle, and Little Roquefort.

The place was an assembly line. Howard recalled animator Al Chiarito starting out at Terrytoons right after he did. There was a female animator named Muriel Gushue. Howard developed a crush on Mannie Davis's daughter. Sixty years later he'd tell her about it at an event in White Plains.

The commute from Brooklyn to Terrytoons in New Rochelle wasn't easy. Terrytoons stayed in New Rochelle that year when it

moved from the Pershing Building into a former Knights of Columbus meeting hall on Centre Avenue. During the move Howard took an animation class taught by Irv Spector at one of the colleges. Spector worked at Famous Studios since the place was Fleisher Studios, and got Howard a job inbetweening at Famous, where they had separate desks and more elbow room.

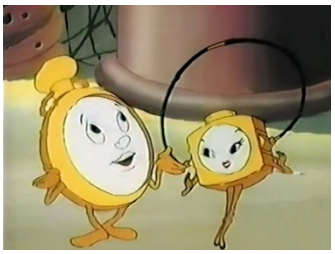
The Famous inbetweeners pool fit Howard like a glove. They paid union wages there. Inbetweeners earned $2.00 an hour. Other inbetweeners coming in at that time included Fred Surace, Truman Parmalee and Jack Dazzo. They were teamed with Sal Faillace an Pierre Del Warde.

Faillace, Dazzo, Beckerman, Parmalee, Del Warde, Surace

The list of animators they worked for is impressive, including Bill Tytla, considered by many of that day to be the greatest living animator. Al Eugster, John Gentilella, Steve Muffati, Chuck Harriton, Bill Hudson, Bill Henning, Gordon Whittier, Tony Creazzo, and Larry Riley animated as leads or assistants.

Al Eugster educated Howard on how to properly fill out exposure sheets. Irv Spector would stop by Howard's desk and share tips about animation, as well as how to write a good cartoon story. Irv Specter was very involved with the Screen Cartoonists Guild, and Howard paid attention to union activities.

Howard Beckerman must have worked on dozens of Famous Studios cartoons, such as Popeye and Caspar, always as an uncredited Inbetweener. The only one we can identify is the Little Audrey



film *LAND OF LOST WATCHES*. There was also sometimes moonlighting work at smaller shops. Moonlighting money turned out to be better. Howard interviewed for a slot at some of the smaller studios.

UPA was setting up a New York branch in 1951. That Hollywood studio had just won the Animated Short category at the Oscars with *GERALD McBOING BOING*. Hot on a roll, UPA intended to get big into east coast animated commercials. As Howard tells it:

> When UPA opened the NY office in 1951 Abe Liss was the art director and I went up to see him. They were still building the offices. There were two people sitting there at animation desks. I didn't know who they were but I found out later the older guy was Grim Natwick. The younger guy was Don McCormick, his assistant.

Natwick gave Howard some pencils bearing the UPA logo and told him to come back later.

The old crowd from the School of Industrial Arts still got together. Among them was Iris Funk, now working as a fashion illustrator in the Garment District. Iris's other passion was dance. She wasn't so impressed with animation until seeing *GERALD McBOING BOING*. She realized the medium's potential to entertain adults. Howard's crowd met at the beach, where Iris talked to himabout art and philosophy and *GERALD McBOING BOING*. She signed up for a class he was taking at the Art Students' League. They became each other's Muses.

Around the winter holidays in 1951 the Army Draft Board sent Howard a notice that he would be inducted. He left Famous Studios to prepare. Howard bumped into Ben Harrison, who offered him a job, which Howard felt compelled to turn down, but then his induction got indefinitely delayed. He started looking for a new job.

Shamus Culhane Productions put Howard on staff as an inbetweener. It may not have hurt that during the war Culhane's animation supervisor Rod Johnson had been Irv Spector's commander at the Army animation facility in Astoria. Regardless, being on Shamus Culhane's payroll was both an honor and an Ivy League education. Shamus had started out at age sixteen under Walter Lantz's tutelage. He put up with Charles Mintz to ink Krazy Kat before joining Fleischer Studios. At Fleischer's he did the first Betty Boop toons alongside Grim Natwick and Al Eugster. Those three fellows would all work on *SNOW WHITE AND THE SEVEN DWARFS* at Disney. They were together knocking out the best toons to come out of Ubbe Iwerks' shop. Culhane, Eugster and Natwick were all in Miami for the two Fleischer feature films. Shamus knew many stories and tricks of the trade.

Of the animators at Culhane's, Willis Pyle impressed Howard greatly. The man's brother, Denver Pyle, was catching on big as an actor in Hollywood Westerns, and on television shows such as *THE CISCO KID* and *THE RANGE RIDER*. Willis Pyle didn't need the reflected glory, being a star in his own right. Willis started out at Disney as an assistant animator on *PINOCCHIO*, *FANTASIA*, and *BAMBI*. During the Second World War Willis Pyle animated for the Army with John Hubley's unit.

After the war Willis Pyle was part of Oscar Productions, which boasted Abe Liss doing layouts, while Norman McCahe, Emery Hawkins, Harry Love. Cal Dalton, and other luminaries animated beside Pyle. They made one Cartoon and then Walter Lantx bought the company. Pyle bounced over to UPA, where he helped Hubley give birth to *MISTER MAGOO*. Willis Pyle worked on *GERALD McBOING BOING* not too long before he relocated to New York to get in on that fast TV commercial money.

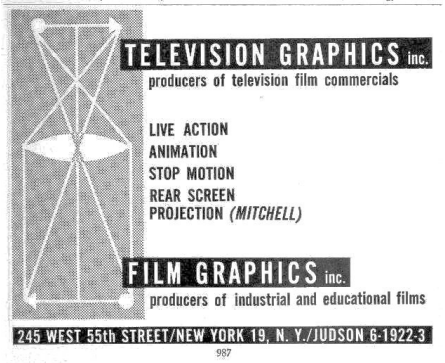
Howard Beckerman absorbed all he could.

The Army took Howard Beckerman in early 1952. While in basic training Howard married Iris Funk. Many of the animators were being assigned to the Astoria unit in Queens, or placed in cushy jobs illustrating training manuals and such. I asked Howard about that and he named a few instances, then, after a well-timed comedic pause he said – "They sent ME to Korea!"

I asked him what he did there and Howard said he painted signs, submitted cartoons to *STARS AND STRIPES*, and stood a lot of guard duty. He said he never really engaged in combat, so I asked if he ever got shot at. Howard laughed and said "All the time! Sometimes by our own guys. Somebody was always shooting at something." One day a jeep pulled up while Howard was on guard duty. Another infantryman relieved him of the post and Howard was whisked off to 2nd Division Headquarters, where he finished out his tour illustrating part of a book on that unit's history.

Howard Beckerman was safely back in New York by the end of 1953, freelancing as an inbetweener for $2.40 an hour. At the time, Lee Blair ran two studios out of the DuArt Building at 245 West 55th Street: Television Graphics specialized in commercials, while Film Graphics handled industrial and educational projects.

The owner, Lee Blair, had been with Disney, where his wife Mary Blair was one of Walt's favored color designers. Lee's brother Preston Blair worked on *FANTASIA*, and was often around as Film Graphics got busy with clients like the U.S. Information Service. Howard Beckerman was hired as a freelancer to inbetween beside Vince Cafarelli, Ed Smith, and Fred Mogub. They worked under animators Ken Walker (another Disney guy) and Lu Guarnier (once an assistant animator for



The membership is grateful to the committee who organized the showing and ran the films at our last general membership meeting. They did a fine job with excellent material. We are also thankful to U.P.A. for the use of their films. The committee consists of the following members:
Burton Freund
Milton Bellin
Howard Beckerman
Hal Street
Bernice Rankin

Leon Schlessinger). The Animation Supervisor Don Towsley had worked on three Disney features, so the whole shop had a Disney feel.

Lu Guarnier would bring a projector from Film Graphics to union meetings to showcase recent films produced by member studios, usually commercials. Howard volunteered to be on the committee overseeing that activity. He and Iris were expecting a child early in 1954, just as work slowed at Film Graphics and the inbetweeners were laid off. Howard moved over to Bill Sturm Studios.

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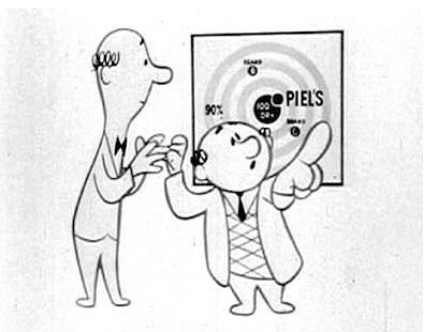
Bill Sturm was a New York fixture, having started at Bray Studios three decades earlier. Sturm animated Betty Boop and Popeye at Fleischer Studios, then briefly went to Disney. During the war Bill Sturm supervised animation for the Navy with Fletcher Smith Studios, opening his own shop in 1949 at 734 Broadway, down in Greenwich Village three blocks away from Washington Square Park.

Eventually Bill Sturm Studios made its way to midtown and the Times Square area. The Powers Building, 723 Seventh Avenue, claimed some prestige, having previously housed Walt Disney's east coast office. Numerous industry related companies passed through there. Howard Beckerman found himself surrounded by animation history.

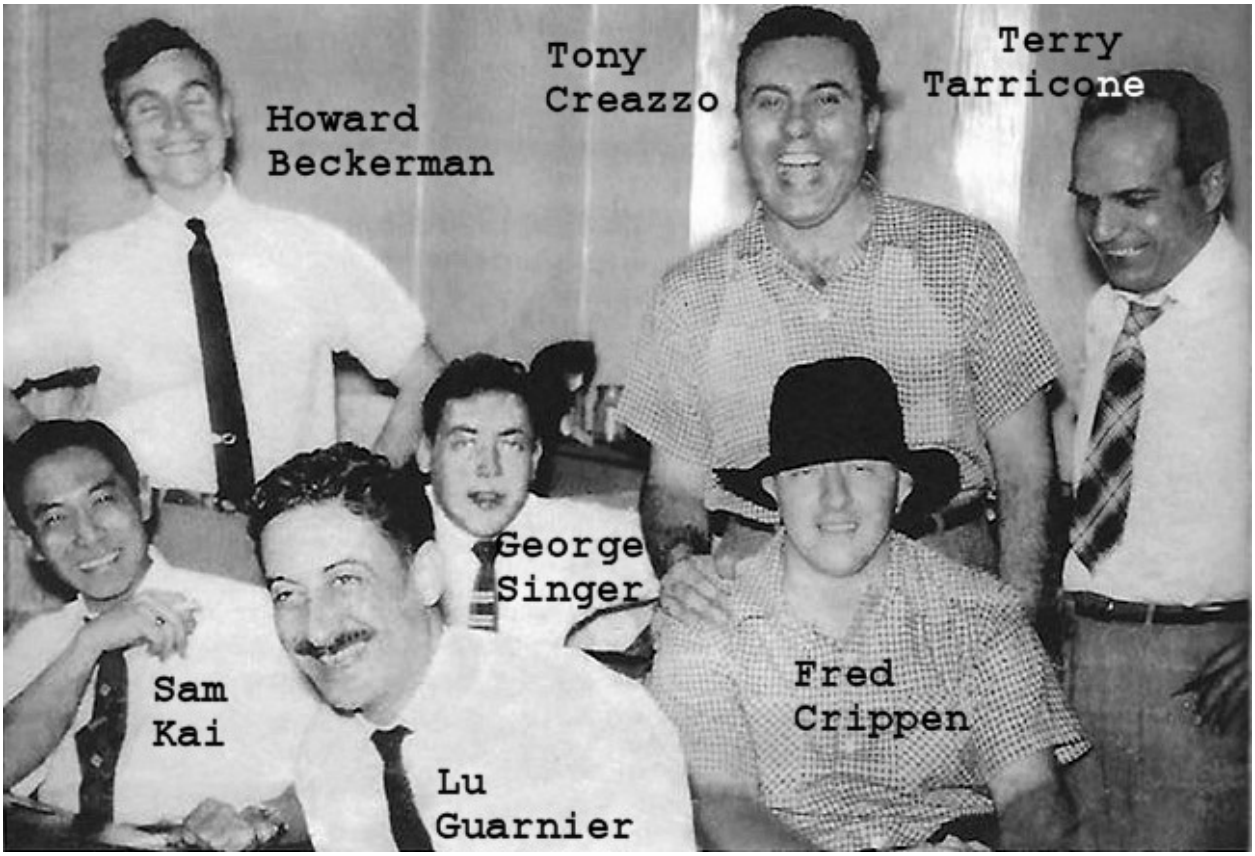
The Beckerman's daughter Mara was born. Howard went over to Cineffects, one of the oldest general service studios in Manhattan. Cineffects was located at 115 West 45th Street, so Howard remained in the Times Square area. I don't know what job position he held there, but in July 1954 Howard went on staff for UPA at 670 Fifth Avenue to assist George Singer in the Lay-Out Department. Abe Liss was gone, leaving Gene Deitch in charge. UPA had a Coca-Cola commercial starring the character Madeline in production.

George Singer moved to UPA's animation room and Lu Guarnier replaced him as head of Lay-Outs. After a bit Vince Cafarelli was hired to do layouts. Guarnier and Howard were placed in the Animation Department with desks near Grim Natwick. ***Howard hit the Betty Boop trifecta***. UPA was a hot ticket, gathering praise over a series of Piels Beer ads starring the comedy duo Bob & Ray as brothers Bert and Harry Piels. The Museum of Modern Art, just down the block, recently dedicated a whole month to screening UPA commercials. Riding the subway, Howard would hear people talk snout commercials he'd contributed to.



Other guests at dinner parties wanted to know more. At night he freelanced for Sutherland Television Films at 404 Fourth Avenue,

They had fun at UPA. Animator Tony Creazzo caused a bidding war between UPA and Sutherland Television Films and UPA that brought about raises for all. Once, they spotted comedian Ernie Kovacs across the street and had the gorgeous designer Edna Jacobs go out and convince Kovacs to take a tour of the studio. But in 1955 Sutherland shut down and Gene Deitch left UPA. Don McCormack became Studio Manager. The work rolled out.



Howard was very active with the union and contributed art to the Top Cel newsletter. He campaigned to be editor of that newsletter in 1956, losing to incumbent Ed Smith. Howard did win the post of UPA's union delegate, and a seat on the Steering Committee for the first annual animation film festival being organized at Fifth Avenue's Hotel Pierre.

A pet-peeve of Howard's was that many animators were either so ego-driven, or insecure, that they never complimented others on a job well done. One day Grim Natwick sat upright and announced to the room "I'm a great animator!", leaving Howard to think 'Great! Where does that leave the rest of us?'.

During 1957 Howard searched for a new horizon, figuring UPA would always be there to go back to. Robert Lawrence, a dapper

mogul, sent Howard to the *avant garde* Ernest Pintoff. It wasn't the right fit. Howard took a job as New York animator for Detroit's new Group Productions. Group's founder Tully Rector went into Europe as a rifleman on D-Day. Moving to Paris after the war, he studied art on the GI Bill at the *Academie Julian* and the *Ecole des Beaux-Arts*. Group Productions commercials quickly became all the rage, and Howard made several trips to Detroit.

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UPA's New York office disbanded in 1958. Don McCormick formed a partnership with Roger Wade-at 15 West 46th Street. Wade had been a combat photographer stationed in China and Burma during the war. He'd established his general service studio in Times Square a dozen years since. McCormick traced back to Disney prior to UPA. He took the title Art Director at their new enterprise known as McCormick-Wade Animation. They hired Howard Beckerman. The shop didn't last long and by 1959 Howard got picked up by Gene Deitch.

At a time when many little studios tried to present as trendy boutiques, Gene Deitch rented loft space above a furniture warehouse on the Upper West Side. He'd just come off a contentious stint as Creative Director of Terrytoons. Deitch brought Al Kouzel with him as Animation Director. Writer Jules Feiffer tagged along. Ken Drake, who'd worked with Deitch at UPA, was production manager. Bill Ackerman, Gary Mooney, and Ed Seeman animated beside Howard Beckerman. During breaks these fellows stood at the window monitoring progress on construction of the Lincoln Center complex across the street.

1960 rolled around. Iris and Howard had a second daughter, Sheri. Gene Deitch got married and moved to Prague. Howard started freelancing. He ran for union president, ending up as V.P. to Wardel Gaynor, one of the first Black cameraman in the cartoon industry. Cullen Associates on 33 East 38th Street, the film wing of Xerox Corporation, put Howard Neckerman and Al Kouzel on staff.

When the CBS Television Network and the U.S. Department of Defense had movie star James Cagney narrate the anti-Communist documentary *THE ROAD TO THE WALL* in 1961, they tapped Howard Beckerman to animate the title. That June Howard returned to Bill Sturm Studios. The studio was in larger space at 49 West 45th Street, keeping busy making military films and commercials for clients such as Savings Bank Association of Massachusetts, Delco Batteries, Blatz Beer, and Firestone Tire. Sturm had two

dozen people on staff, including Sal Butta and Rudy Tomasseli. Don McCormiek was Vice-President in Charge of Production. Ken Walker acted as Animation Director. Orestes Calpini was Creative Head. John Vita painted Backgrounds. A few months after Howard showed up, Bill Sturm sold the studio and moved to Washington D.C.

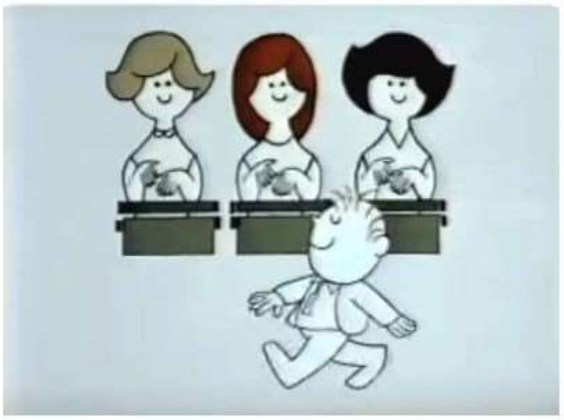
Thrust back into freelancing, Howard Beckerman went to inbetween for Elektra Films at 33 West 46th Street. Phil Kimmelman, who'd started at Famous Studios just after Howard left, supervised Elektra's animation department. Abe Liss, founder of Elektra Films, was Creative Director. Elektra had a reputation as a cutting edge studio.

Going into 1963, Howard continued freelancing, as well as writing articles for photography magazines. He also acted with the community theater in Forest Hills, taking the lead role in the play *OUTWARD BOUND*. Al Koozel made a film for Otis Elevator with Howard Beckerman animating parts. Near the end of the year Howard took a job as writer/artist for Norcross Greeting Cards. When Crawley Films of Canada decided to make a sequel to *THE WIZARD OF OZ*, they contracted Rankin/Bass at 116 East 30th Street to do the animation. This was before Rankin/Bass became famous for their half-hour holiday specials. *RETURN TO OZ* was a feature-length cartoon airing on NBC.

Howard came on the project early, doing Continuity Design, Storyboard and Layouts. Animation was handled by old pros George Rufle, George Cannata, George Germanetti, and Milt Stein.

Still freelancing, Howard Beckerman brought some story layouts he'd done to Paramount Cartoons, the saddest incarnation of Famous Studios. Howard Post was in charge. Beckerman left the boards there but never heard from Post. While making the rounds during 1966 Howard Bumped into Phil Kimmelman on the street, Beckerman learned that Howard Post was gone and Paramount Cartoons put Shamus Culhane in charge. Culhane hired Beckerman and they creayed a few theatrical films to finish out the Noveltoons series.

One Noveltoon, second to last in the series, was conceived and animated by Howard Beckerman. He also co-designed it with children's book illustrator Gil Miret. ***THE TRIP*** is about a dude working at a big city office who gets stranded on a desert isle.



It is a study in the fundamentals of animation production. Simple. As elegant as a Hubley Studios film, yet basic enough to embrace slap-stick humor. There is no dialogue or sound-effects, just Winston Sharples' music, and Shamus Culhane directing.ut Heigh Ho! It's off to work they go! Suddenly Culhane stormed off in a huff. Two weeks after Ralph Bakshi took over Paramount Cartoons Beckerman was laid-off.

He rebounded with a job as head of animation at the newly formed D'Amylar Productions. *Alymar* denotes a very spiritual person who often relies on intuition for decision making. As one of the trendy new service studio, this shop catered to

SIX MONTHS OLD..... AND MY, HOW WE'VE GROWN!
(WE'VE OPENED A NEW BRANCH IN BUENOS AIRES.)
Ernest di Giovanni ▪ Howard Beckerman ▪ Rudolph Legname ▪ Barry Sigal
d'Amylar Productions Inc.
New York—Buenos Aires
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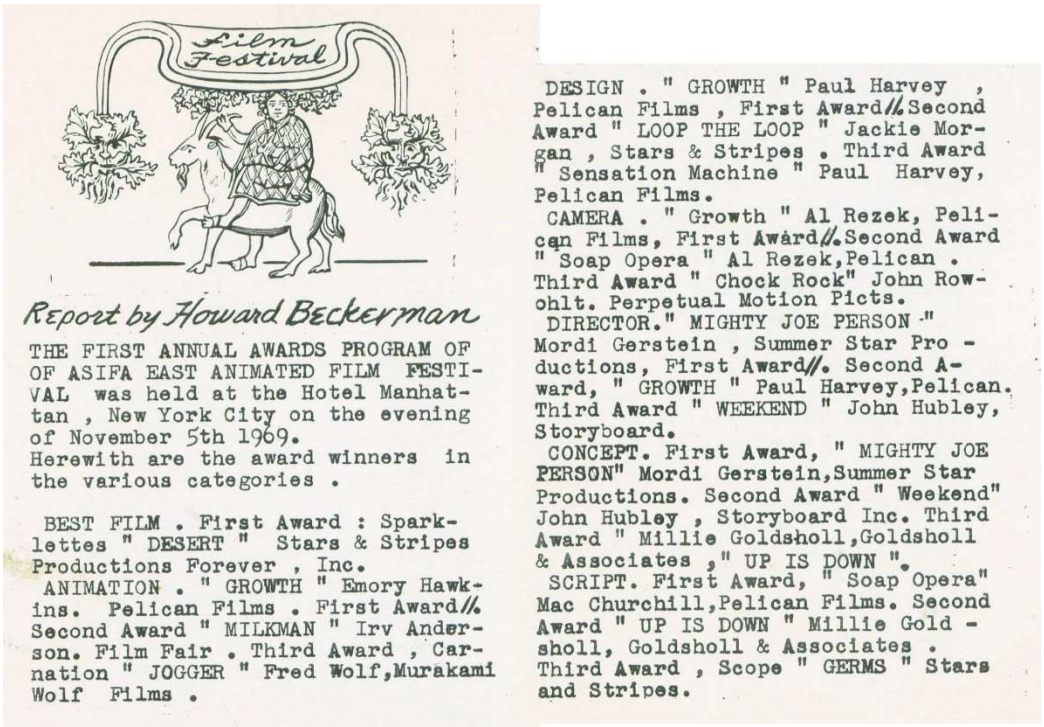
high-end clients, with an office at 440 Park Avenue South and the studio at 155 East 38th Street. Ernest di Giovanni, a former English teacher and sales rep for Stars and Stripes Productions Forever, owned D'Alymar. Vinnie Bell worked there a while. After a year Howard went back to freelancing.

A lot changed during Howard's two decades in the business. Famous Studios and Terrytoons were gone. No more big studios. Animation found itself in the midst of an identity crisis. Theatrical shorts faded fast. Television shows were routine drivel, Artistically, TV commercials were pretty much the only path, but were they tarnishing the art-form's integrity? To prevent that, an international society called ASIFA formed in France to bolster appreciation of animation. ASIFA Chapters were opened around the world. In New York it was ASIFA-East. Howard and Iris Beckerman participated in its organization alongside Faith and John Hubley, Tissa David, Vince Cafarelli, Dick Rauh, Hal Silvermintz, and others.

Howard volunteered at ASIFA as he freelanced – for Ray Favata at Gryphon Productions – and for Shamus Culhane on *ROCKET ROBIN HOOD*. Howard also donated time supporting the Screen Cartoonists Guild and the National Cartoonist Society.

His friend Al Kouzel hired Howard Beckerman in 1969 to write some episodes of *WINKY DINK AND YOU*. Izzy Klein scripted others. Each episode contains a gimmick where kids used a crayon on a sort of clear vinyl sheet clinging to the TV screen. Violet Gellman, who'd been at Famous when Howard was there, managed production. The staff were mostly newer artists, with old-hands Tom Golden and Chuck Harriton mixed in to show them the ropes.

WINKY DINK AND YOU got made at Ariel Productions, 210 Fifth Avenue, across the street from Madison Square Park. If one glanced diagonally across the park they'd see the Neptune Building, where John Bray Studios existed decades earlier. In autumn 1969 ASIFA-East held its first Animated Film Festival. Howard Beckerman chaired the screening and wrote a report about the event for Top Cel that December.


Film Festival
Report by Howard Beckerman
THE FIRST ANNUAL AWARDS PROGRAM OF OF ASIFA EAST ANIMATED FILM FESTIVAL was held at the Hotel Manhattan , New York City on the evening of November 5th 1969.
Herewith are the award winners in the various categories .
BEST FILM . First Award : Sparklettes " DESERT " Stars & Stripes Productions Forever , Inc.
ANIMATION . " GROWTH " Emory Hawkins. Pelican Films . First Award// Second Award " MILKMAN " Irv Anderson. Film Fair . Third Award , Carnation " JOGGER " Fred Wolf,Murakami Wolf Films .
DESIGN . " GROWTH " Paul Harvey , Pelican Films , First Award// Second Award " LOOP THE LOOP " Jackie Morgan , Stars & Stripes . Third Award " Sensation Machine " Paul Harvey, Pelican Films.
CAMERA . " Growth " Al Rezek, Pelican Films, First Award//. Second Award " Soap Opera " Al Rezek,Pelican . Third Award " Chock Rock" John Rowohlt. Perpetual Motion Picts.
DIRECTOR." MIGHTY JOE PERSON " Mordi Gerstein , Summer Star Productions, First Award//. Second Award, " GROWTH " Paul Harvey,Pelican. Third Award " WEEKEND " John Hubley, Storyboard.
CONCEPT. First Award, " MIGHTY JOE PERSON" Mordi Gerstein,Summer Star Productions. Second Award " Weekend" John Hubley , Storyboard Inc. Third Award " Millie Goldsholl,Goldsholl & Associates ," UP IS DOWN ".
SCRIPT. First Award, " Soap Opera" Mac Churchill,Pelican Films. Second Award " UP IS DOWN " Millie Goldsholl, Goldsholl & Associates . Third Award , Scope " GERMS " Stars and Stripes.

Howard ran for the post of Top Cel editor in 1970. It went to Izzy Klein. Howard's friend Tee Collins opened his own studio at 2 West 45th Street. It was the first Black-owned animation shop in Manhattan. Tee and Howard had become close when Tee did layouts at UPA. Now, Tee was of the opinion that any real money was being made by studio owners, so why not work for yourself? Tee convinced Howard to do the same.

A third daughter, Amy, had been added. With more than twenty years of experience under his belt Howard took a plunge. Splitting the rent with a graphic artist, he opened Howard Beckerman Animation down in the Village at 117 East 18th Street, a block or so from Union Square Park. Iris put her illustrative skills to use as a designer, inker and painter.

They moved in on July 4th. The girls helped lug supplies and were rewarded with ice cream from a neighborhood shop. Howard's studio provided hand-drawn animation. Corporate-sponsored films and educational stuff were the main fare. Elinor Bunin had PBS contracts to fill and called on Beckerman. This accounts for the *SESAME STREET* segments he did.

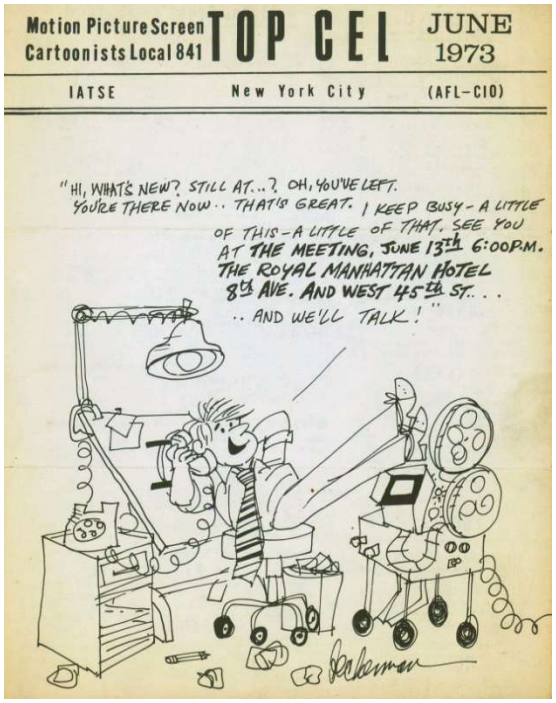
Top Cel notes Howard being at Elektra Films the same month his studio opened, possibly to augment his income while things got going. Elektra was different this time around. Abe Liss had passed away, leaving Sam Magdoff in charge. Elektra was in its last days. Magdoff went over to Parsons School of Design as Associate Dean of Continuing Education. When Parsons lost its Cartooning teacher in early 1971 Magdoff called on Howard to fill in temporarily. As a favor, Howard agreed, but his studio was getting busy. Aside

from his segments for Children's Television Workshop, Black Flag bug-spray had him doing commercials. Howard Beckerman Animation made *HOW TO REPRESENT 3D SHAPES* for the Xerox Corporation. Howard said this about operating the studio:

> Depending on the size of the job we were doing, I hired other artists and sometimes my students and my daughters.

The academic front had bigger plans for Howard Beckerman. In 1971 he lectured at the Westchester Educational Council of Audio-Visual Communications. Being management at his studio disqualified Howard from union membership. He channeled that energy into ASIFA-East, where he and Iris were members of the Executive Board.

In 1972 Howard started a course in Animation Drawing, as the School of Visual Arts expanded their animation programming *FILMMAKER'S NEWSLETTER Magazine* hired Howard Beckerman as a feature editor to write a monthly column about animation.


Motion Picture Screen Cartoonists Local 841
TOP CEL
JUNE 1973
IATSE
New York City
(AFL-CIO)
"HI, WHAT'S NEW? STILL AT...? OH, YOU'VE LEFT. YOU'RE THERE NOW.. THAT'S GREAT. I KEEP BUSY - A LITTLE OF THIS - A LITTLE OF THAT. SEE YOU AT THE MEETING, JUNE 13th 6:00 P.M. THE ROYAL MANHATTAN HOTEL 8th AVE. AND WEST 45th ST... .. AND WE'LL TALK!"

Howard Beckerman Animation, intermingled with Howard Beckerman Associates, moved to 24 West 45th Street in 1973. A three-story building next to the Harvard Club. Famous Studios used to be directly across the street. Howard helped create a History of Animation class at the School of Visual Arts. Even as Management, Howard still had a relationship with the Screenn Cartoonists Guild. That June he supplied the Top Cel cover.

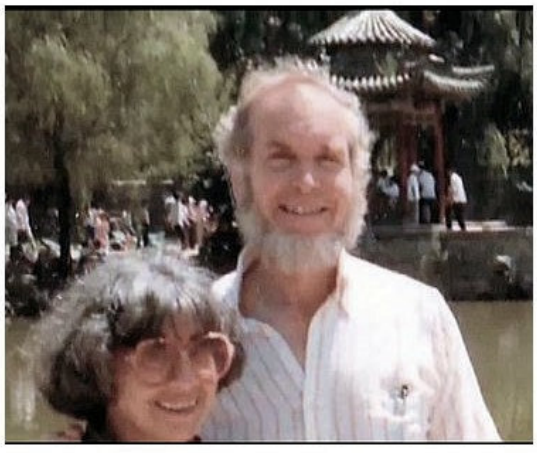
Two years later Howard Beckerman Animation moved to 19 West 45th Street.

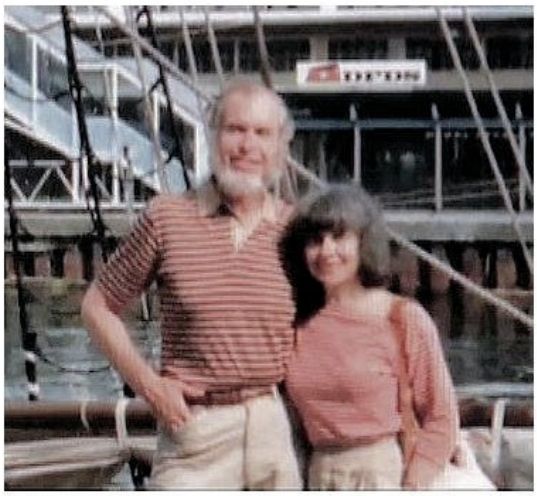
Folks from Famous Studios had used this building as a shortcut to the subway, due to another entrance on 44th Street. Richard Williams and Shamus Culhane both had studios there at some point. RAGGEDY ANN & ANDY: A MUSICAL ADVENTURE was in full production there during 1976, as Howard and Iris worked at bringing David Gantz's DON Q comic-strip to television. Sadly, the project never reached the airwaves.

Being both an animator and a print cartoonist put Howard in a good position to observe a lot. The up-coming generation of animators knew him as their teacher. Howard contributed articles to *MILLIMETER Magazine*, *CARTOONIST PROfiles*, and other animation oriented publications. He was designated 'the Dean of New York City Animation'.

The National Cartoonists Society chose Howard to host A TRIBUTE TO ANIMATION in 1978. The Beckermans had a good life. Their daughter Mara was a painter at Perpetual Motion Pictures in 1979. At that time, Howard Beckerman and Camille Marinelli were involved with animation classes for kids at the Motion Picture & Television Center Foundation in Astoria.

During 1980 Beckerman's studio moved across the street to 45 West 45th Street. Joe Oriolo had the Beckermans doing a *FELIX THE CAT* project with Bill Lorenzo. In 1982 Howard began writing the *ANIMATION SPOT* column for *BACK STAGE*. ASIFA-East sometimes sent Howard and Iris around the globe representing the organization and prepping international film festivals.

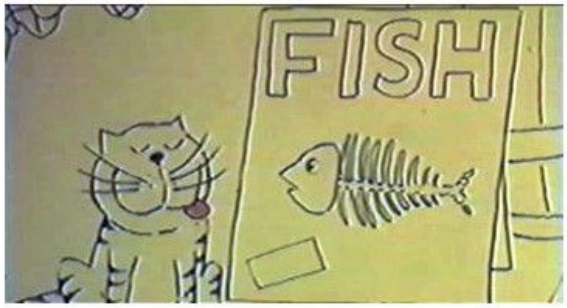


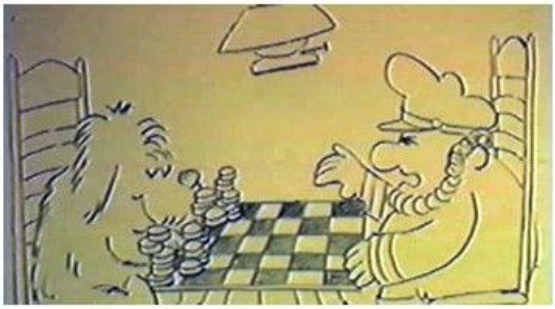


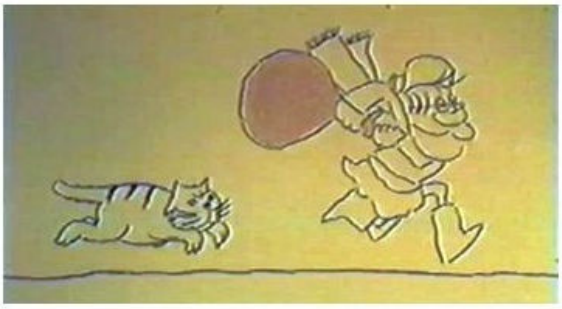
Commercial animation was undergoing big changes. Many clients wanted computer generated imagery. Stop-motion animator John Gati had been with Film Frames in the Seventies, then Action

Productions until 1981, where he worked on commercials for Long John Silvers Restaurants, and the People's National Bank & Trust Company in Michigan, as well as a television pilot titled FLUTEY AND THE KNIGHTS during 1981. In 1982 Gati had his own shop. He put out a film for the festival circuit and it played well. John Gati convinced Howard and Iris they should do the same.

Howard conceived a cartoon about a lighthouse beam revealing the night-time antics occurring in a seaside town. *BOOP BEEP* went on the film festival circuit in 1984.







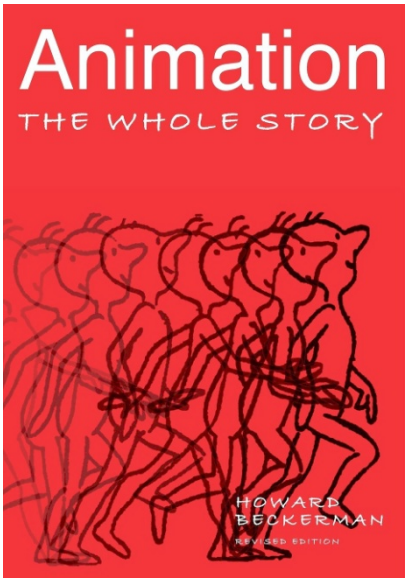
At one point Howard invited Tee Collins, Ray Favata, and Bill Fochs over to sit in front of a video-camera discussing the business. Each of them owned a studio. Bill Fochs did titles and graphics at 321 West 44th Street. Poor storage has rendered the tape unwatchable, but a salvaged aoundtrack is available. https://archive.org/details/45-meet Tee Collins is the first voice.

Ray Favata, Bill Fochs, Tee Collins & Howard.

Howard Beckerman Animation moved again in 1987, this time to 25 West 45th Street. The old Famous

Studios address. They remained there until 1990 when Howard brought the studio to his house in Flushing, Queens. He did storyboards for Jumbo Pictures' show *DOUG*. It was only one episode, *DOUG BAGS A NEMATOID*, but Howard had been teaching long enough that it gave him the opportunity to work with some of his old students.

Teaching and ASIFA business kept Howard and Iris active. Iris got known as a leading restorer of old animation cels, a growing business among art dealers across the country. She restored a lot of early Disney cels. Sadly, in 1998 Iris was diagnosed with Alzheimer's Disease. As the family adjusted to that, Howard focused on teaching both the history and the art of animation. He called upon old conversations with Shamus Culhane, Grim Natwick, and other pioneers of this up-and-down industry. Every in-coming group of students was told to look at the person sitting next to them, because "you'll be working for them some day". He served as advisor for student films. Howard's travels on behalf of ASIFA granted him a solid world-view that led to his publishing *ANIMATION THE WHOLE STORY* in 2001.



Sticking closer to home, Howard continued teaching at the School of Visual Arts and with his writing, penning articles for the ASIFA-East newsletter *ANYMATOR*, where he also contributed cartoons.

"Sigh! My animation students don't know who Walt Kelly was."

For that newsletter he created an on-going strip:

ANNY MATOR
By: Howard Beckerman
.....to be continued.....
JUST THINK, MR. VOCALATRO YOU'LL LEND YOUR MAGNIFICENT VOICE TO ANIMATED OPERAS— YOU'LL SING THE ROLES OF DON GIOVANNI, DON QUIXOTE, DON JOSE, DON ALTONSO—
OR MAYBE EVEN-
-DON ALDUCK?
SHOPPING BAGS?
YEP- SECURITY FOR TRAVLIN'
AIRPORT TAXI
SECURITY?
SURE— YA BRING YER STUFF 'N THEY PACK IT!
BAGGAGE CHECK
ANNYMATOR
by: Howard Beckerman
To be continued.....
IT'S ABOUT TINY INVISIBLE CREATURES- DUST MITES- THEIR LIVES, LOVES AND PASSIONS. I CALL IT- "DESTINY IN THE DUST"!
WHADDYA THINK, GUYS?
-AND DON'T FORGET UNDER THE DESKS!
O.K., O.K.
beckerman

2008 brought *FORGING THE FRAME:THE ROOTS OF ANIMATION, 1921-1930*, a documentary directed by Greg Ford and Mark Nassief. https://youtu.be/Yl_rcEKeqwY?si=aEby8EVKVDBe1YqS Howard Beckerman is among the historians interviewed. He did speaking appearances, lectures, or tributes to fellow animators. During 2011 his student Casey Safron produced *AT HOME WITH HOWARD BECKERMAN*. https://vimeo.com/26595841

Iris Beckerman passed away in April of 2012. Near the end, when Howard would visit Iris in the hospital, he'd see Doris Polansky there. Her husband Marty Polansky was in that same facility. They'd all known each other for years. After both spouses passed, Doris and Howard grieved together, and settled into being companions.

Howard appeared in *CARTOON CARNIVAL*, a 2021 documentary directed by Andrew T. Smith.

I got to know Howard around 2018. Phil Kimmelman had been remembering who he could put me in contact with . . . so thank you, Phil. And thank you, Howard. Access to your steel-trap memory proved invaluable. Your advice was always sound, and your encouragement often needed. I'm sorry I tried to put a hook in your article. A gentleman such as yourself is above such hokum. You are missed!